

Fundamentals of Expression

LELAND POWERS AND
CAROL HOYT POWERS

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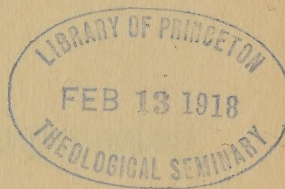
Fundamentals of Expression

BY

LELAND POWERS

AND

CAROL HOYT POWERS



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Fundamentals of Expression

Basic Principles

IMPERFECT as all art is at the present day, it is yet man's effort to speak of the spirit to his brother man in terms of spirit.

The individual artist is not a creator, he is a reflector and that man or that woman is the greatest artist who reveals most impersonally some glimpse of truth, the recognition of which is latent in all and patent to the artist.

This is often a hard understanding for the student of reading. Perhaps he has been taught to believe that he has unusual gifts and rare talents, and when he learns that the process of becoming transparent to truth is one that must be painstakingly learned, he is given to questioning. It is to answer some of these questions that this little book is written.

The artist, whether he be public reader, painter or sculptor, simply reflects truth and

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beauty — he never creates them. They are and were and always have been.

When the art to be considered is public reading, that man or that woman is the best artist whose windows are cleanest, if the expression may be allowed, or better still, who, as a mirror, is most nearly free from fog and mist and things which bedim.

This cleaning of windows and clearing away of fog and mist is what must take place before the reader's work is revelatory.

In every art manifestation the cause is mental, or to state it in other words, the cause of the expression must be in *intelligence*.

This must be proved and it can only be proved by such perfect obedience of voice and body to the mentality or mental cause that the reliance on intelligence *is evident in the expression*.

The body must be trained to willing obedience to the intelligence — such perfect obedience that it (the body) disappears as body, as material, both to the consciousness of

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the reader and to the consciousness of the audience, and instead, the idea appears *embodied*.

The understanding of many in regard to body is this — that if the body is made free and beautiful by means of certain physical exercises to train it in grace, it will *of itself* do the right thing, provided the mental concept is clear and intelligent.

As expression is an essential part of conception, one could never be sure that the concept were clear unless the expression were true. Also if the body is to be allowed an intelligence of its own, is it being proved that all causation is mental? For instance, the arm feels a desire to do something of itself, and feels free to do it, — something entirely unnecessary to the literature one is interpreting, a motion that is merely the result of nervousness and sensation. One makes the motion because one feels like it. Part of the expression is the result of sensation, is it not?

Body and voice, in our art, are nothing of

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themselves, and the would-be reader must first of all gain this understanding.

In other arts — the painter's and the sculptor's — the material symbols which are used claim nothing for themselves, and yet their use is precisely the same as is the use of the human voice and body in public reading.

The paint of the painter and the marble of the sculptor are used to embody an idea. Let us watch the process of the painter.

He has seen a magnificent sunset, — it has awakened in his imagination a vision of glory which he feels impelled to embody.

His concept is mental, but he must use material symbols to embody this concept. There before him is the red paint, which is matter, material. He paints the picture. You look at it. You behold the sunset, — you catch the glory! Where is the red paint? It has disappeared as paint, as material, and what is seen is the artist's idea embodied.

The problem of the public reader is the same as that of the painter. The painter's concept was mental, — so is the reader's;

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the painter was obliged to use material symbols, — so is the reader; the red paint ceased to be seen as paint and became to the imagination of the beholder an idea embodied — the human body must cease to be seen as body, it must become *embodiment*.

But the painter's problem is comparatively easy, for his medium is inert, it claims nothing of itself, while the human body claims an intelligence of its own.

So first and foremost the reader must understand that this claim is false. In our art the body and voice have no intelligence of their own, they have no center of their own, they are nothing of themselves.

Only as they are trained to obey the fundamental laws which underlie all expressive activity do they get out of the way, do they cease to interfere; then they become the embodiment of the chosen literature.

As the painter draws his inspiration from nature and life, the reader receives his from literature. The glimpse of truth and beauty he would reflect he finds in the printed page.

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It is the mission of the reader to turn the printed page back to life; — in other words, to translate, in terms of life, form and color, the awakening which masterpieces of literature have given his own mind and heart. The piece of literature selected for vocal interpretation should be correctly analyzed, not only for the purpose of stating its fundamental truth, but as a preliminary process to reading each part in the light of the fundamental truth, thus preserving the very flavor and essence and purpose of the literature. The endeavor to understand and appreciate the spirit and essence of great literature, to embody the spirit and essence, to reveal it, to express it, to train the voice and body to become transparent to this spirit and essence — this is the work of the reader.

Technique

ALL expression or manifestation, in order to be in the realm of art, must fundamentally conform to, and be governed by, an unvarying principle, which, although difficult to state, amounts to this: All good art manifestations have their causation in mind, spirit and are addressed to mind, spirit and although employing material symbols as media, still speak in terms of mind, spirit.

All bad art manifestations have their causation in sensation and are addressed to sensation and speak in terms of flesh, or sensation.

Good art awakens the consciousness to a realization of spiritual inheritance and kingdom. Bad art puts to sleep the consciousness of spirit and awakens the consciousness of the senses.

That is the principle, the perception, knowledge and understanding of which is bound ultimately to govern the criticism of all art.

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That principle furnishes the standard by which eventually all art will be judged.

No comfort can come to us from the fact that our art has the glory of employing for its media the living voice and the animate body, while all the other arts, the singer's excepted, are forced to employ inanimate material, unless we as artists face the danger that goes with that glorious advantage and train and master our animate bodies and living voices to be as submissively obedient to every varying phase of our intelligence and artistic purpose as the sculptor compels his marble to be or the painter his lines and colors.

The greatest weakness of our art springs from its greatest strength. This living instrument of ours, which seems to so intimately clothe the thought's form and to be so fluid to mind's action that it appears almost to be mind-action itself, is, in its untrained state, the most stubborn obstructor of the artist's true message, — the most rebellious and deceitful of all the media that art in any

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of its activities has to employ. For this living instrument of ours seems to have a will and life of its own and always, in its untrained condition, wants to be master instead of servant. Furthermore, it seems able to hypnotize one into mistaking its sensations and excitements for thoughts and emotions, and its resultant activities for revelations of truth and power and purpose.

We, as interpreters of literature, can never be artists, nor can we hope to have our work recognized as art, until we grasp this vital and fundamental truth. We must be willing to learn how to make our voices and bodies submissive and obedient servants to their real master, the mind, and then we must *choose to do it*. Conscious perception dominates all art manifestation.

In other words, our art has a technique; otherwise, we are not artists. The true technique of any art can be defined as the most successful way of making the material instrument reflect the mind's message while at the same time calling the least attention

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to itself. Such a technique is a matter of slow growth and is the outcome of many patient observations and many experiences of many patient and experienced *doers*. This has always been the process in all art.

A definite, intelligent, well-formulated technique is gradually but surely being evolved in the reader's art. Soon a knowledge and mastery of this technique of voice and body will be demanded of any public reader who expects to establish his claim to artisthood.

The technique we make our plea for is not the exhibition of graceful bodies, or the exploitation of beautiful voices — it is rather the body and voice trained to obey and the mentality trained to see and to choose and to direct.

This technique is absolutely necessary for the revelation, through the spoken word, of the message and purpose of great literature. The conception and appreciation of great literature is essential and fundamental in our special art, it is the fountain of supply, it is the heart and soul and reason for being

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of our art, but we cannot stop with conception and appreciation. Our mission is to interpret and that necessitates a well-mastered technique.

We must never forget that while literature is our fountain-head, our supply and inspiration, it is because it gives us chosen *life* depicted in chosen terms.

The reader's office is to turn the printed page back into *life*, that the listener may have something of the vision which inspired the poet when he wrote the lines. If this be done the years will be few before public reading is recognized as one of the most revelatory of all the arts.

It is our mission and privilege to interpret *life* in epitome, — life in chosen terms, — life as caught in literature, where, by a master's hand and a seer's eye, its great moments are caught and held fast; where its great purposes and tendencies are traced with convincing and illuminating clearness; where its realities, its heights and depths and breadths, unfold before our understanding. Great lit-

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erature is a collection of masterpieces of art dealing with masterpieces of *life* and *experience*, purged of the non-essential, the trivial, the superfluous, the impertinent and the unmeaning.

These master-moments of life, set down by master-hands on the printed page, it is our joy to translate back to life and movement and the burning word and it is our joy to know that if, with an intelligence trained to perceive and appreciate, a heart alive to sympathize and choose, a body and voice obedient to every mind-activity, our work is done with sincerity and simplicity, with receptive spirit and open mind, the heart of the hearer will be opened, his life and daily experiences, his longings and hopes and doubts will be illumined and ennobled, values will fall into the right relations as he listens, and his puzzled and troubled mind will see that much of what before had seemed serious and insurmountable obstacles were unrealities, or perhaps processes in the unfoldment of a half-perceived truth.

Personality

THERE are many public readers, lecturers and doubtless clergymen who feel that their success with an audience depends upon will-power.

It is even taught that the power to dominate an audience, swaying it at will, can be cultivated and, moreover, is desirable.

What is the province of the public reader and what should be his attitude to his audience?

The reader is before his audience to reflect to them the truth and beauty of the literature he is to read.

He is not there to force his will upon the audience; nor is he there to dominate the audience in any way: he is there to serve the truth and serve it so obediently that the audience is awakened to things of the spirit. He touches a spring which opens to his audience a vision of truth, which is theirs as well as his; indeed, the vision which is

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awakened may transcend anything which has come to him.

So few of us realize what it is that constitutes our real selves, that the technical training we must receive before we are even on the road to become artists often dismays us. In this process of elimination we are afraid that all that made us ourselves is being taken away.

In another chapter the statement was made that that man or woman was the greatest artist who, as a mirror, was most nearly free from fog and mist.

The technical training of a school must be to free the student (or rather to teach him how to become free) from things which bedim the manifestation of his mental concept. He has, as a student, certain physical habits, certain pet gestures, certain vocal peculiarities which constantly cloud and dim the truth he would express.

When he is corrected for these habits and is told that just as his audience was getting a bit of truth, it was brought back to

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his personality by his personal gesture or vocal cadence, which had nothing whatever to do with the literature he was reading, he is alarmed. He says, "Oh, but that is natural to me! I have always done that! If I lose that I shall not be myself!"

How little we know ourselves when we think our individuality depends upon such trivial things.

To express one's individuality one does not need to try to be unlike some one else, but always and ever more nearly *right*.

The revelation which comes to one and is portrayed by one is always a distinct revelation — the same universal truth, but the individual understanding. The knowledge of this would do away in the reader with the temptation to use his will upon his audience. The use of will-power, sometimes called personality, sometimes personal power, is fatal to the artist and bad for his audience. No revelation of truth can come in this way.

An individual who starts out with the false idea of personal power endeavors to move his

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audience to smiles or tears by personal will. He departs from the basic principle which is, that his only mission is to reveal or reflect truth. This action of his will upon his audience gives him a certain physical sensation which is at once apparent in his body. As this habit is indulged in more and more, all his processes become inverted, until finally, when he appears before an audience, he simply tries to reproduce in himself the physical sensation with which he has associated his sense of power over an audience. This continues until there is absolute disintegration of any power he seemed to have.

What a relief to come back to the real mission of the artist and to the right understanding of individuality!

The clearer and simpler is one's understanding of truth, the more distinct is the individuality. The more obedient the voice and the body to fundamental law, the more transparent they grow to the intelligence and the truth and the beauty of the literature are revealed with less and less fog.

The Law of Trinity

ANY fundamental principle or law of expression, in order to be accepted as a principle or a law, should be so apparent in the expressional act that it needs only to be stated to the student or the observer to have him at last discover it. In fact, with skill, the teacher can so awaken self-observation in the student that he will, in demonstrating a simple problem in expression, not only discover the law but also be able to state it more or less clearly.

For instance, who can fail to recognize the truth and inevitableness of the following law? All reflective states of thought manifest themselves in accentric motion (towards a center). All executive, vital, passional states of thought manifest themselves in eccentric motion (away from a center). All affective, volitional states of thought manifest themselves in concentric motion (about a center).

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To demonstrate this law, let the reader get to his feet, or even remain seated in his chair, and then assuming the state of thought of deep reflection (not dreaming, but closely following an introspective process of thought), note the tendency of all the physical agents of expression to draw together, to enfold. The chin gets lower on the chest, the lids narrow, the brows knit, the hand comes up to meet the chin, etc. If one is on his feet he will note that his poise is withdrawn over his back foot.

Now assume a state of thought of life, vitality, energy, ability and readiness to do. Note how the head lifts, the chest expands, how the poise of the body is carried forward, and the arms, the executive agents of the will, move away from their center, the chest.

At last assume the affective, volitional state of thought, the state where the thought, after a reflective process, comes to a decision, a choice, just before moving into action. Note now that the agents of expression hold themselves at balance, in the normal realm be-

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tween accentric and eccentric action. The motion is concentric (about a center).

The philosophy of the law is this: when the thought is in its reflective state it is dealing with an impression already received. It proceeds to search for its center, its principle, which, when found, gives meaning and entity to the impression, relates all its parts and gives it its purpose. While in this state the thought shuts itself to all other impressions but the one being dealt with. Accordingly, the obedient body makes a picture of this action of the thought — the gateways of impression close, the lids narrow, chin draws in, etc.

As soon as the thought-process has found the center, the reflective state ceases to be dominant, for as soon as the impression is analyzed and the center found, a conclusion must be formed, a decision made, a value given. This is the volitional, or affective state of thought. It seems to say, "I have chosen; I see the truth; I arrive at a decision." This is the "will" part of the thought. The expressive agents make a picture of this

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state by being in a state of balance, as if on the normal line between motion towards center and motion away from center.

If the action of thought should stop there; if "will" failed to carry the thought's decision into act and demonstration; if the thought failed to take on its third state, its vital, expressional state, it would be an abortive thought, incomplete, unfinished, unrealized. But the whole, complete thought now passes from its "choosing" realm into its "doing" realm, as if it said, "I go on my errand, I act, I am *deed* as well as perception and will." The obedient body springs to action, the avenues open, the motion is away from center, radiant, unfolding.

These three thought-activities exist as a trinity — they can not be separated in consciousness, but are distinct in expression. Each complete thought manifests this trinity. In each complete thought these factors are co-existent, co-essential, co-operative. The law of their activity is called The Law of Trinity, and dominates all expressional ac-

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tivities. This law was discovered and formulated by Francois Delsarte.

For convenience in teaching, arbitrary names are given to the factors in this trinity:

1. The reflective activity is called "Mental."

2. The affective, volitional activity is called "Moral."

3. The passional, expressional activity is called "Vital."

In every idea to be expressed, all of these factors are present, but one of them is dominant. If the expressional form is pantomime, the dominance of the mental factor will be shown by contraction, enfoldment, appearance of withdrawn vitality. If the "moral" factor be dominant, the embodiment will be characterized by uprightness, balance, normality, vitality dominated by purpose. If the "vital" factor be dominant in the idea to be expressed, the characteristics of the expression will be expansion, freedom, unfoldment, appearance of ability to do.

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Habit of thought, together with environment — which doubtless causes habit of thought — throws men into classes or types. When the “mental” factor is habitually dominant in a man’s process of thought, his physical appearance takes on, as habit, the characteristics of the “mental” factor: contraction, stooping, head carried forward, brows drawn together. Such a man is given to reflection without action, analyzing but never doing — often not even coming to a conclusion.

When the “vital” factor is habitually dominant in a man’s thought, his habitual bearing is expansive, full-chested, strong, active. Such a man is apt to act without sufficient reflection.

The “moral” factor being habitually dominant in a man’s thought, his carriage is habitually upright, reposeful, well-balanced, sometimes to the extent of being a pose. Such a man is given to forming conclusions and decisions without much reflection and then seldom carrying them into execution.

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The inharmony in expression resulting in these cases mentioned is because the factor habitually dominant tries to do the work of the whole trinity and is always unsuccessful. The body schooled to obey only one factor habitually disputes the expression of the other two.

The Voice

IN order to be of any practical help to the student in the training of his voice the teacher must meet him face to face, become acquainted with his disposition and habits of thought, make it plain to his understanding that the Good Voice is his by right and that it will come into his possession not by acquirement but by discovery. The teacher must patiently and encouragingly show the student the way, make clear to him what every vocal exercise is for, and watch carefully that it is practised correctly and intelligently.

The student can accomplish more in one hour's practise with his thought clear as to just what he is trying to accomplish with the exercise, with his pattern held clearly before him in his mind's ear, than by days of mere "doing" the exercises with inattentive thought.

It is doubtful if anything helpful can be

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written about the physical training of the voice — the development of right tone production. The statements made in such a treatise would be liable to misunderstanding and misapplication, not from lack of intelligence in the writer or the reader, but because it is difficult to find just the form of statement or direction which clearly conveys the writer's exact idea to the reader's mind. Even when the student is under the personal instruction of the teacher it is often found that various experiments in statement and direction need to be tried before a student's imagination is aroused and a vocal ideal established in his mind, and the difference between it and his present vocal ability made clear to him.

I say "imagination" because in releasing and developing the student's voice certain muscles which have become inert or faultily automatic in their action, have to be brought back under the student's voluntary control and it is through the imagination that the conscious action can be at first induced. For

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instance, a student who has no voluntary control over his throat, when told to open it, will, more than likely, muscularize it and close it, but if he be told to yawn and to note the feeling of the throat-action, very soon he will be able to consciously reproduce that throat-action and thus open his throat voluntarily.

The ablest voice-masters know there are three indispensable conditions to proper voice production: first, proper breathing; second, proper breath-control and support; and third, proper direction of tone. Some teachers call the last, proper focus of tone, or voice-placement. Correctly speaking, there is no such thing as direction of tone, or focus of tone. Direction implies a motion or stream, and tone is neither, — it is a state of vibration. Focus implies a point where tone-vibration is more concentrated than at any other point, and this too is incorrect, because when the tone is rightly produced its vibrations exactly fill the entire mouth-chamber, from the vocal cords to the lips. But the terms, direction and focus, help the imagination and, if

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properly worked out, educate a voluntary control of the muscles of the throat, pharynx and tongue, so that they are held out of the way, allowing the tone-vibrations to fill the mouth-chamber. If they but partially fill the mouth-cavity the effect of the tone is that of being misdirected, misplaced, or unfocused.

Most of the difficulties met with in vocal training come from a belief on the student's part that his voice-consciousness should be at his throat. The result of such a belief is a muscularization of those parts of the throat which at last must have only the sense of expanded openness. By turning the student's attention from his throat to "direction," or "focus," or "placement of tone," his right imagination is enlisted and proper condition of throat more easily follows.

Some voice-masters ignore the essential of proper breath-support, claiming that if a proper vocal focus or direction can be induced, the breath-control and support will be established without calling the student's attention to it. In my experience as a teacher I have

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not found this to be true. However it may be arrived at, the breath-control and support are absolutely essential factors of right voice production and without them the throat inevitably takes upon itself the office of controlling the breath, which office properly belongs to the diaphragm and the muscles of the chest and body.

A very able voice-master once told me he had never yet met a vocal difficulty in a student which he had not been able to overcome by training the student to right breathing and proper breath-control and support, directing the student's thought to the proper point of applying the muscular action, removing the attention of thought from the part that should be passive to the part that should be active and by patient practise establishing the right habit instead of a wrong one.

A very interesting case was related to me by this voice-master. He was a guest at the house of a certain college president whose son was afflicted with a very high-pitched voice, almost a falsetto. At dinner one

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evening the father asked what was probably the physical cause of the peculiarity. The professor explained that doubtless there were faulty muscularizations in the throat and larynx, caused by misdirected thought, — that if the consciousness of vocal grasp should be transferred from the throat to the region of the waist the voice would undoubtedly fall to a normal pitch.

The young man listened attentively and asked a few questions. At breakfast the next morning he spoke to them in a normal, medium-pitched voice and never again went back to his old vocal habit. It took some time to train his voice into flexible and unconscious right action, but it was done.

The young man explained that the professor's idea was at once clear to him as he listened at dinner and that after he had reached his room he spent nearly all night endeavoring to transfer his vocal consciousness from his throat to his diaphragm. When he awoke in the morning it had been done.

Before the voice can be intelligently trained

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in its office of interpreter of spiritualized thought, all these fundamental right habits must be established. Nothing is so effective in confirming these right habits and leading the student to a full realization of the Good Voice as using it as the interpreter of the truth, beauty and purpose of good literature. But it is only after the preliminary training and tuning of the vocal instrument that the student can be brought into a demonstrable understanding of the use of his voice as a medium of artistic expression. This second step in vocal development is much more interesting but not more important than the first. The first is full of drudgery and calls for much patience on the part of both teacher and student; the second has the deep interest of discovery and brings with it a sense of coming into one's inheritance.

About the second step in voice development certain things can be set down on paper which will be suggestive and enlightening to the reader. We can at once agree that however beautiful and free the voice may be, if the

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possessor of the voice be not also possessed of spiritual and intellectual life and culture, there will be nothing of value for the beautiful voice to express — nothing worthy of chosen expression.

On the other hand, however high the purpose, however spiritualized the thought, however beautiful the conception, without the trained voice the revelation through the spoken word will be obstructed and imperfect.

It is interesting and helpful to trace the action of the Law of Trinity in the vocal expression. If the voice be a true manifestation of the mind-action it must manifest in some indisputable way the action of the three thought-factors: the mental, moral and vital.

In thought-action it is the office of the "mental" factor to divide, analyze, define, arrange, indicate. The voice, serving that factor, will be definite, concise, and clear.

The office of the "moral" factor is to win, charm, console, give value. In expression the voice serving that factor takes on roundness,

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sweetness, softness, smoothness, melody. The "vital" factor in expression gives the voice strength, largeness, roughness, vehemence. Its office is to arouse, stir, support or overthrow.

In utterance the "mental" factor speaks in the emphasis, the "moral" in the melody, and the "vital" in the strength, rate and range.

In the "intellectual" type of man the mental factor is habitually rather than rightfully dominant in his thought-action. His voice will betray this by being habitually definite, concise, argumentative, even when the purpose of his thought may be to arouse and stir, or to win and charm. On the other hand, the "vital" type of man will be apt to use a voice which will arouse and stir his hearer even if his purpose be to define and argue. The first lacks vocal fulness and power, while the latter lacks clearness, conciseness and definiteness.

The human intellect has for its final medium of expression articulate words. "Vocal

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sounds articulated in verbal forms are the pure vehicle of the thoughts of the head, and the inflected tones with which they are expressed convey the accompanying comments of the heart upon those thoughts."

The thoughts of the intellect can not be expressed in tone and melody. Tone and melody are the language of the feelings; they express what can not be expressed in words — only *described* in words. The thoughts of the intellect can be expressed in words without voice, — written upon a page.

Doctor Alger has written: "The character of a man is nowhere so concentratedly revealed as in his voice. In its clang-tints all the colors and shades of his being are mingled and symbolized. But it requires a commensurate wisdom, sensibility, trained skill and impartiality to interpret what it implies. Yet one fact remains sure: — Give a man a completely developed, freed and obedient voice and there is nothing in his experience which he can not suggest by it. * * * A perfected voice can reveal

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almost everything which human nature is capable of thinking or feeling or being, and not only reveal it but also wield it as an instrument of influence to awaken in an auditor correspondent experiences."

Good Reading

WE know good art by its effect upon us. If a painting has given us a glimpse of life that is true and eternal, if it has even induced in us a feeling of revery so that we stop for a moment in the rush and tear of existence and pay attention to some voice or picture from within, it has accomplished much and we shall venture to say it is good art.

I recall a picture I once saw of a lonely shore with a solitary figure gazing seaward.

The first impression received was one of vast loneliness. This was closely followed by a feeling of the impotence of the figure on the shore and the greatness and vastness of the universe. Then came the wonder of the vastness of the universe and then the greatness of the Mind that created it, and I was left with the feeling of the unchangeableness of God.

This picture first induced a "mood of

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mind " which was followed by a train of thought that led away from the picture itself to something in my own understanding. Contrast this picture with one of many you may have seen where each unimportant detail was finished with such elaborateness that the picture as a whole never became a thing of mind to appeal in turn to mind, but remained a literal expression of things seen with the physical eyes. Such art never gets beyond the gateway of the physical senses. If the artist-reader induce in his audience a certain thoughtfulness instead of physical excitement, a certain restful joy instead of turmoil, if he turn the thoughts of his audience away from that which can be seen with the physical eye and heard with the physical ear to some inward vision his reading comes under the head of good art.

The reader does not go directly to life for his inspiration. Literature is his reservoir and because he must express life through some one else's understanding of life he should be careful to choose the best, the

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truest and the most wholesome, that which enlarges human vision and deepens the understanding.

Every story, poem, scene or play that a reader desires to interpret has a theme, a central idea or, as we would express it, a purpose. The good reader will interpret each part of the poem, story or play in the light of this central idea or purpose.

This brings about a relationship of parts, resulting from a subordinating of one part and an enlarging of another. There is a general service toward the bringing out of the purpose. The result of this proper relationship or blending of parts is *atmosphere*.

Such reading becomes the embodiment of an inward vision. It starts in each individual listener some thought or "mood of mind" which is along the line of his own experiences.

The reading which fails to awaken thought in the auditor is often too literal both in the understanding and grasp of the literature to be expressed and also in the method of expressing it.

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If the reader's own understanding of life be deep, if his sympathies be wide, his interpretation will go deep into human consciousness. If, by any chance, his understanding be deeper than the author's, then his interpretation will sink deeper into human consciousness than would the reading of the same piece of literature from the printed page. Even then he must be fundamentally true to the purpose of the literature, and because this is an obligation of common honesty he must select literature that is worth while, not only in form but in fundamental essence. Every piece of literature that is worth interpreting is not just the opinion of an author, but if it comes under the head of art, it is a revelation, a gleam of truth; and so the reader's problem is not to interpret one man's opinion, but to be true in his turn to this gleam of truth and to try to express it.

But this ability on the part of the reader to express truth and beauty is something which is gained only by careful, painstaking and right study.

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Many persons have, from their youth, a certain fertility of imagination, a sympathetic understanding and a loving sympathy, all of which are fundamental and necessary in the would-be reader, but these are only the very beginnings of the art of expression — in reality, they are only the good soil.

The reader who shall so truthfully express the beauty and joy of a poem that the hearer turns from that which is seen with the physical eye and heard with the physical ear, to some inward vision or inward voice, is the one who through patient hours has cut away in his expression, things which bedim and obstruct.

The right and constant endeavor to reflect the spirit of literature, through a trained voice and body, brings an understanding of the very essence and spirit of the literature to the reader himself, that is almost unbelievable to the one who hasn't observed the process.

The very effort to make clear and true the expression, ridding the expression of personal habits, of mannerisms that interfere, of vocal cadences that get in the way, actually clarifies

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the vision of the reader; indeed, it is true that the more nearly clear and simple the expression becomes, the clearer grows the vision.

The good reader — the artist — turns the printed page back to life and through the glimpse of chosen life gives his hearer some viewpoint, some vision, some understanding which is basically what the author had when he wrote the lines, but because in art we are reflecting from an unlimited reservoir, this basic message or viewpoint stirs in each individual hearer something which attaches itself to his own experience.

Manifestative and Descriptive Action

THE words "manifestative" and "descriptive," as applied to action, to gesture, are used with great glibness by the young student of public reading, yet the fact remains that there is great confusion in many minds as to the meaning of these words.

Doubtless we would all agree upon these definitions:

Descriptive action merely describes the unrelated objects or acts or situations in a piece of literature. It is representative or illustrative.

Manifestative action reveals the impression the situation or the piece of literature, as a whole, has made upon the reader; in other words, it reveals the feeling and state of mind which the literature as a whole has induced in the reader.

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From these definitions it is evident that purely descriptive action would not reveal any understanding of the purpose of the literature, while manifestative action would always do so.

Any system of gesture which has run to definitions and to nomenclature has many dangers.

To learn to read, one must read. One must try over and over again for the best embodiment of the spirit and essence of the literature. As one tries over and over, under intelligent guidance, one dimly discerns a law: then is the time that a definition can be given or the law stated by the teacher, but not until the mind of the student, through constant endeavor to embody the literature, has opened to receive it.

The understanding of the principle which underlies these definitions of manifestative and descriptive action would enable one to be a helpful critic of a reader's work, but the understanding of the principle is the essential thing. Without the understanding of the principle definitions are useless.

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To apply a rule to the work of a reader is to judge by the physical eye and the physical ear.

When one understands the principle underlying all action, one knows that the only way to judge the action of a reader is to listen with one's heart to the reading itself and then analyze the impression received.

The law of time properly observed will sometimes render an action manifestative which would otherwise be descriptive.

The experienced teacher sees that there are certain temperaments that think in movement. They are usually keenly dramatic and quick of vision. Their tendency to action must not be stopped; it must simply be trained, rendered obedient to the whole spirit of the literature. As years pass, these dramatic temperaments will find that perhaps a gesture with the finger may take the place of a full-arm gesture, but this change must be the result of growth and maturity, and if it be the result of growth, the later gesture will have in it all the effect and more, of the

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earlier. But to cut off and clip at the start is unwise.

To train, to prune and to render all action obedient to the purpose of the literature: this is the teacher's work.

Studying a Part

AS the words spoken by any man during a limited number of days indicate but slightly his character, so the written words of a character in a play convey only suggestions and indications of the real man which is to be characterized. From the few words that a character says during certain hours or days, at most, chosen by the dramatist out of the character's entire life, together with the few things said of him and to him by the other characters in the play, the actor must build out the full rounded and consistent man. Every one who possesses the dramatic instinct has a certain fertility of mind which renders it only necessary that these seeds of suggestion be planted that a growth ensue.

Assuming that one possesses the dramatic instinct and has committed the lines of a part to memory and has familiarized himself with the emotions they imply and the

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states of mind they indicate, — simply assuming these states and attitudes of mind and repeating again and again the lines connected with them will produce an awakening in other parts of one's nature and one by one other phases of the character's mind will be revealed to one. From constantly assuming the attitude of mind that the character takes toward the different people in the play, one will soon grow to feel, for instance, the attitude the character holds towards God. One will grow to be sure how he would speak to children; what he thinks of himself; whether he overcomes temptation easily or with difficulty; what his hidden ideals are. All these things come to one by degrees as he works patiently and receptively, until at last one comes to know the character better, perhaps, than the author himself knew him.

In studying a character, then, the student is to make the written words his own, and the indicated conditions of mind and heart his own. These two things he must let grow into the most intimate relationship, so that

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the words seem part of the emotion, and the emotion sure to be active when the words are spoken.

By the time this point is reached, provided the student has an intelligently trained body, the character begins to reveal itself in bodily movement. One knows now how he would carry his head, how he would walk. Bits of characteristic movements of the hands or of the mouth, which are not the student's, will come upon him in response to assuming some phase of the character's nature. All this comes, not from sitting and thinking about the character, but by tirelessly saying his speeches over and over with an understanding spirit, walking his walk, using his hands and making his motions, as the knowledge of them comes to one.

As soon as any action comes to one from assuming some phase of the character's mind, an action resulting from some more thorough immersion in the character than usual, some moment when one feels that one is indeed *receiving*, then that physical action must be

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noted and preserved. It must always be used at that point until a new and better revelation is received. And let me say that when one is before an audience is not the time to make changes or to depend upon inspiration. One must then do simply what has been predetermined, always, however, being in such a receptive attitude of mind that new light may come; but the thing practice and study have told the student was right must be done, nevertheless. Of course there comes with the inspiration of the audience certain renewed enthusiasms and sometimes a sudden gleam of new meaning in a line. One should distrust the enthusiasm produced by the audience. When once again in the studio, whatever seems to have been revealed while before the audience, should be tried over and over so one can hold it as one's own independent of the inspiration, for if it is true it must not be lost and one is not likely to have the same gleam at the same place again, and it will not do to go back when a better has been given.

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Surrounding and including the art of impersonation of character, there is a larger art — that of wielding a play as a whole. Each character may be well done, yet, lacking the larger art, the life and beauty of the play as a creation will be non-existent. It is by virtue of the larger art that the play becomes in a reader's hands an instrument for good. No matter how humble and unpretentious the play may be, if it has truth in it and is faithfully presented, it will help to enlarge human sympathies.

The play in the artist's hands begins to be an entity and a living thing when he feels that he is its providence — that he surrounds it and that in him it "lives and moves and has its being." The artist to his play supplies the life, he *is* the life, and he is the thing that lives. In it he is omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent. He knows the beginning and he sees the end. He knows the relative influence that every trifling act or word of each character has towards that end; he sees the far-reaching significance

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and tendency of such an act or word and by virtue of this knowledge or vision each word and act is given its proper value and relationship to the play as a whole and to all its parts. His sympathies are alive and quick and in close touch with every side of the lives of his characters. It is strange, but the artist will know that even when his indignation is aroused and his regrets are poignant at the action of any character, that the character is a free agent and he, the artist, is powerless to make him do differently, even though the character is alive with his life and moves with his body.

This true central self of the artist, the part of him which sits in judgment and sympathizes and helps, is never given over to the use of the character he is impersonating. He gives his body and a part of his consciousness, but the highest part of him, — the judge, the life-giver, the God-like part, stands and watches and guides, and sympathizes.

Art

WORK that is an expression of the worker is always a joy and always, in a measure, artistic. Art is joyful self-expression plus a good deal. Art is never selfish, it never argues, never preaches, is never opinionated. It does not speak in patois; its language is universal.

The self, then, that is being joyfully expressed in its work, must be, in order that its work be art, a certain revelation of higher self which comes to the artist, a consciousness of self in relation to truth and harmony, universal and ever-unfolding.

This revelation the artist is impelled to express. He feels that until he can embody it the revelation will be vague and unformed, even to himself. He feels that the expression is a part of the revelation. As the vision is noble the expression must be noble and in chosen and selected terms. The work which is a joy to the artist is a patient trying over

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and over, selecting, rejecting, combining and re-combining, the vision craving expression growing more certain and luminous as its embodiment grows. The artist himself knows he is not creating but revealing through symbolisms. To him art is, as Browning says, "the one way possible of speaking truth."

Followed to its highest definition, Art is man's effort to bring into manifestation his understanding of God.

Art and life differ in this: art is the illuminated understanding manifesting itself in *chosen* terms; life is the manifestation of the mixed self, full of contradictions, — too often made up of selfishness, opinion, policy, fear, — manifesting itself in haphazard, mis-chosen, unselected terms hiding all reality, purpose and truth. True, this is not the real life, the life of a son of God — the manifestation of an illuminated understanding of Truth and Love. The real life is the expression of unselfed love and is lived in chosen terms. Littleness, meanness, falseness, un-

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worthiness, selfishness, self-seeking, self-exploitation, fear, envy, malice, all are rejected and eliminated as being contradictions rather than expressions. Such a life becomes a work of art — an effort to manifest, in chosen terms, one's understanding of God as Love and Truth, omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. It fulfils all the conditions of art: it is beautiful, true, inspiring, illuminating; it speaks of spirit in terms of spirit; and the living of such a life must react upon the individual to make ever clearer his understanding of God. In fact, his expression *is* his understanding.

Browning says: "Art does the thing which breeds the thought." Whether or not the artist works into an embodiment his vision of Truth, Beauty, and Love, his understanding of God, with the incentive and purpose of breeding the same understanding in another heart, is a question — probably no more than does the man who is trying to demonstrate in his life his vision of the Love of God. They both do it because it is a part of the

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understanding. They can not help it. The truth is vivid and it must be told in joy. It is the truth and love *embodied* which "breeds the thought" and, whether in art or life, arouses the sleeping consciousness and awakens the dormant thought and heart of men to the perception of truth. Art is the voice of one crying in the wilderness. All true art is beneficent. If art at its highest be man's effort to bring into manifestation his understanding of God it behooves the artist to have his heart clean and his understanding clear.

I believe the time is coming when only the art which uplifts and blesses and heals will be considered art at all. All true art awakens human consciousness to the truth that life is not organic or material, but divine and infinite. All true activities arouse the thought to this truth. It is not exclusively the office of religion, or rather, all true activities are religious — art pre-eminently so.

Professor Hudson used to say that a thorough Christian is the highest work of art,

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inasmuch as he is a man's effort to bring into manifestation, in chosen terms, his understanding of the Love of God. The greatest work of art then that has ever blessed this planet was the earthly life of Christ Jesus.

Definitions of Art

ART is a grasped generalization of the truths of nature, freed from all coarse, crude and degrading accidents and details.

The consummate artist, observing the principles of law, does everything easily; while the empiric, striving at facts, does everything laboriously. — ALGER

Art may tell a truth
Obliquely, do the thing shall breed the
thought,
Nor wrong the thought, missing the mediate
word. — BROWNING

The statuary ere he mould a shape
Boasts a like gift, the shape's idea, and next
The aspiration to produce the same;
Cries ever, "Now I have the thing I see!"
Yet all the while goes changing what was
wrought

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From falsehood like the truth, to truth itself.

* * * * *

God only makes the live shape at a jet.

— BROWNING

Art is feeling passed through thought and fixed in form. — DELSARTE

Art is the science of the Beautiful and to the Master as certain as one and one to the mathematician make two, or two and two make four — and like him the Master can add or subtract combinations at will.

— WHISTLER

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